

A

GROAN

FROM

A True Blue *Presbyterian*,

Who is no Lover of *Independency*,
nor an Admirer of *High Flown*
Presbytery; who would drown
the *ignorant zealous Professor*,
and pour burning Coals on the
lukewarm Laodicean Temper.

Flevimus, & GEMITUS luctantia verba repressit.



EDINBURGH,

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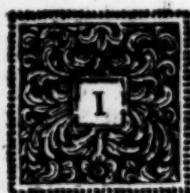


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A
G R O A N
FROM
A *True Blue* PRESBYTERIAN, &c.



IT may, perhaps, be expected, that I should say something by Way of Preface, for the Publication of this Performance. I cannot pretend, with many, the Importunity of Friends, nor the Excellence and great Worth of the Piece itself. I believe the best Thing that can be said for it, is, That this is an Age in which a strong Itch for scribbling every where prevails. *Docti indoctique scribimus omnes.* And tho' I can't deny, that the Desire of appearing in Print has been a Motive, yet I heartily wish it may do Good, tho' I don't expect very much from it.

Christianity is one of the greatest Blessings that ever was bestowed on Men, and would undoubtedly make a happy Alteration to the better, both upon particular Persons, and Societies, were the Doc-
trines,

trines, contain'd in it, sincerely believed, and the Duties, enjoined by it, heartily practis'd. This would exalt the Understandings of Men, refine their Temper, and regulate their Conduct. It would make particular Persons easy to themselves, and advantageous to Society, lessen many of their Troubles and Sorrows here, and fit them for being entirely easy and happy hereafter. Yet, notwithstanding all this, Men may abuse their own Mercies, and make that very Thing, which ought to be an Instrument of Peace and Harmony, and a Source of the greatest Blessings to Men, become an Instrument of Bitterness, Wrath, and Contention; especially when it is managed by Men whose Spirits are strongly influenced by a bilious and acrimonious Humour. Were we to look at the present Face of our Church, we might soon be convinced, that a great deal of this malignant Humour has prevailed among many, and still continues to spread its poisonous Influence. Many Pieces have been published, to set Matters in a clear Light, and remove Mistakes; but when neither strict nor loose Reasoning, neither gentle nor rough Treatment, Representations, nor Cries, will do; what is then to be done, but to *weep* or *groan*? And sure there is much Ground for *groaning* in our Day.

That I may pursue this Subject with some Distinctness, I shall,

1. Shew what a *Groan* is.
2. Notice some Occasions of *groaning* in our Day.
3. Offer some Thoughts which may prevent the like melancholy Temper for the Time to come.

1st. I am to shew what a *Groan* is. This, in general, I apprehend, to be a heavy and melancholy Sound, taking its Rise from the Heart and Lungs, making its Way along the Wind-Pipe; and at last expand-

expanding itself in the open Air, and dying away with its Sound diminished.

This I take to be the general Notion of a *Groan*; and there is no particular Sort, but what is contained in it, or may be easily reduced to it. There are a great many Sorts of *groaning*, which I shall not pretend to enumerate. I shall only notice two; a *religious*, and an *affected Groan*.

A *religious Groan* is such a mournful Sound as comes from a deeply affected Heart, struck with a just Sense of a Man's guilty Nature and actual Miscalriages; or flowing from a Compassion on our Fellow-Creatures, or arising from a View of their Follies, irregular Practices, and distracted Management, tending to the Dishonour of GOD, their own Hurt, and the Disquiet of Society. And sure, were all these Causes of *groaning* fully represented, and put in a due Light, they would furnish us with abundant Matter of Sorrow and Grief. For what can be more apt to raise a *Groan* from the Bottom of our Hearts, than a View of the Corruption of our Natures, and of many of our Practices, as having stamp'd upon them all the Lineaments of Ignominy, Contempt, and Disgrace. And will not a View of the Miseries of our Fellow-Creatures, force a Sigh from a generous and compassionate Breast? And sure a Review of the Weakness, Stupidity, Error, Stiffness, and Obstinacy of many, is apt to produce the same Effect: But now I am to consider an *affected Groan*.

This has all the Features of a real and religious one; but its Parts are not so fine and delicate, nor its Causes so regular and uniform. The *affected Groan* is loud, and visibly comes from a whole Heart, and is accompanied with an artificial turning up of the
White

White of the Eye, and distorting of the Muscles of the Face. It obliges the Person, when he speaks, to make his Chops go like a Pair of Nut-Crackers; or, at least, to speak *rotundo ore*; 'tis frequently attended with a wagging of the Head, like the *Pendulum* of a Clock; sometimes with a Beating of the Breast; with an oh! oh! and a dextrous Motion of the Hands. It proceeds from a Desire of being thought serious and devout, for a Shew and Appearance, without a Substance. Hence, for the most Part, it publishes itself in publick Assemblies, with great Vigour and Noise; but is perfectly calm and silent in private. The Reason of this is, it meets with no Commendation alone, but only in the Company of others. And then it may be said, as is well observed in Mr. *Ralph Erskine's* Riddles,

*I am not what I seem to be;
My Life is all a Mystery.*

But now I come, 2dly. to notice the Causes of *groaning* in our Day. And here I shall not touch all those which every one may see with an Eye half open; such as, that the most Part of Men have a very sound and orthodox Profession, but a very unsound and guilty Life and Conversation; or that Men seem still to retain the Principles of our reformed *Presbyterian Church*; but are guilty of great Defections from that Purity and Holiness of Life which was once its Glory and Ornament. This, I am sure, makes as dismal an Appearance, as a Body would do, which is beautiful and fair without, but within is full of pernicious and mortal Diseases. This Consideration, however weighty it is, and deserves the pious Care, and reasonable Zeal of every good Man to prevent its Spread;

Spread; yet I shall wave it, and only notice these Causes of *groaning*, which are not commonly observed; or which, in Practice, meet with an easy Approbation. And these are to be found either among the *People*, or among the *Pastors*.

First, Among the *People* there are to be found Causes of *groaning*; such as, 1st. The different Way and Manner in which they receive the Word preached by different Men. There is nothing more common, than to see many Hearers entertain the best Things, that can be said by some Men, with a careless, negligent, and indifferent Air: Sometimes with a dull and sleepy Appearance; or with Ridicule, and disdainful Contempt; when, in the mean Time, the Preacher introduces himself to his Discourse handsomely, speaks to his Subject pertinently, and inforces what he says with Strength of Scripture and Argument: But if another sets up in his Stead, who has the Fortune to be in their good Graces, and to pass for their Favorite, how will they stir their Feathers, with Pleasure prick up their Ears, put themselves in a hearing Posture, and gape at every Word that is uttered, as if their *Darling* spoke by Inspiration; much in the same Manner as I have seen a numerous Crowd gaping at the Harangue of a *Quack Doctor*, ready to swallow down his fustled Medicines, and purging Pills, when, in the mean Time, they would despise a knowing Physician, prescribing proper Remedies in a rational Manner, according to the Nature of the Disease? And is not such a Sight as this sufficient to make one *sigh and groan*?

2^{dly}. The absurd Reasons, for which the *People* prefer one before another, are Causes of *groaning*. And these commonly are, a strong Brain, a lively Steerage

Steerage, or some Quaintness in the Face, and Peculiarity in their Phrases, Matter, or Method.

1st. Some People prefer one before another, because of their strong Brain, that is, the Strength of their Lungs, and the Thundering of their Voice. They are apt to imagine, that a Man's Parts, and Skill in Divinity, reach as far beyond others, as the Sound of his Voice can go; never remembering that good Things may be found in the still and small Voice, if it is sufficiently audible, as well as in the furious and raging Tempest. 'Tis true, indeed, a right Cadence, and a raising and tuning of the Voice on proper Occasions, is a great Embellishment to a Discourse. But this is not the Thing that is taking: 'Tis a raising and straining of the Voice, in of Purpose, and out of Purpose: 'Tis a squeaking sometimes like a broken Bag-Pipe, which is applauded; or a broken tremulous Voice, like that of an importunate *Blue-Gown* begging an Alms; that's looked upon as the joyful Sound; never remembering that a Man may lift up his Voice like a Trumpet, and yet be a tinkling Cymbal, and a sounding Brass. All may be Words and Wind, with a strong Report, *ab anteriori*, but little else. And sure it would raise a Groan to see People catching at the Wind.

2^{dly}. A good Steerage is another Reason of People's Preference. By this I mean all these *Pulpit-Feats* of Activity, performed by the Preacher, when he declaims in the Chair of Verity; such as, violent Contortions of the Face, contracting of its Muscles; a turning of the Mouth to one Side, like a *Jockey's Horn*; a quick twinkling Motion of the Eyes; a stretching out of the Arms, and shaking prettily with the Hands, as if they were in a paralytick

ytick Fit; a raising and sinking the Body, like a young Girl learning to cuppee with a Dancing-Master; or a turning cleverly from Right to Left, and about as they were, &c. These, and the like Things, are look'd upon, by some, as Marks of an active and pithy Preacher, a driving the Nail to the Head, and a pressing Home the Affair upon Folks. When a Man, who has a decent Motion, and a grave Gesture in his Delivery, is looked upon as a dry and lifeless Performer. Now, when this passes for a Test of a Man's Worth, is it not sufficient to raise a Groan?

3dly. Another Cause of the People's giving the Preference, is some Quaintness in the Preacher's Phrases, Matter, or Method; such as, when they would tell us, that some Men corrupt sound Doctrine, and mix their own Errors with it, the Phrase is, *That they spoil the Bairns Meat, and throw Poison, among the Porridge, into the Pot.* When they would express the great Blessings our Saviour will bestow upon the hungry Soul, they'll tell their Hearers, *The meikle Pot is on, and they'll get all their Coggs filled.* When exhorting People to flee to the Blood of sprinkling, for the Pardon of Sin, they exhort People to *apply a Plaster of Christ's Blood to the Sore; to suck the Breasts of the Promises; and to take Insestment of Christ's Legacy.* When speaking of good Men's living by Faith, they'll desire the *Believer to live upon his Jointure.* When awaking the Attention of their Hearers, the Phrase is, *O! Hearties, Hearties, hear me now, &c.* These, and the like Phrases, are taking with some People; but I cannot be answerable for their conveying true and solid Notions of Religion to their Minds. They may pervert the Understanding, and spoil the Taste, with such a green Sickness

as to make People relish nothing but Coals and Chalk, since they debase *Religion*, and beget low and indistinct Notions in the Minds of Men.

2dly. The constant Matter of some Mens Discourse is very taking with many; especially when they talk of nothing but *rich Mercy*, *free Grace*, and the *absolute Promises*; and Men's believing these, are theirs at the rights; and then assuring People, that if they can only persuade themselves, that all the Promises are theirs, they are then in a safe Condition. But how absurd this is will appear to any thinking Man; for the Scripture assures us, that it is they only who have believed, who have a Right to the Promises. Hence, if a Man is to persuade himself, at the first Instance, that the Promises are his, he is to persuade himself of a Falshood; and if the Exhortations of such Men, persuading People that the Promises are theirs, depend on this, that the *absolute Promise* belongs to all the Hearers of the Gospel, then all the Hearers of the Gospel must be saved; for the Gifts and Callings of GOD are without Repentance; and if these belong not to all, then all are not bound to believe this, till they are assured they have entertained the Gospel according to GOD's own Call. And it is very absurd for Men to pretend, that an awakened Sinner can have no Comfort from the conditional Promises; since the Apostle *Paul*, who was as good a Divine as the best of them, seemed to be of another Mind, *Acts xvii. 31*. And if this were true, that all the Promises belonged to a Person, when he can, by a resolute Persuasion, believe that they do so, then Mr. *Erskine's* Riddle would be no Riddle,

*All sinful, yet I have no Sin;
All spotted, and yet wholly clean.*

But

But if the Matter of the Preacher's Discourse should be a continued Invektive against the Administration and Management either in Church or State, and a loading of them with sly Calumnies and indirect Reproaches, or open and barefac'd ones, this will be the most savoury and tickling to a great many. To hear that those who move in superior Spheres are Backsliders, guilty of dreadful Defections; and notorious Encroachments upon the Rights and Liberties of the People; tho' the Accusation should be ever so unjust, yet will it be received with a sacred Veneration, as a Thing that has stamp't upon it all the Characters of Honesty, Truth and Plain-Dealing. And would not this make any one *Groan*, when people imagine themselves pious and good, wise and learned, high and honourable, only because some soul-mouth'd Persons have Brags enough to stroke their Sides; and condemn others every Way their Superiors; and yet never reflecting that such Persons endeavour to give them bad Impressions of their betters, that they may ride and spur them themselves.

3dly. The Method which some Men use, procures them the Preference; for tho' such a Person should not introduce himself naturally to his Text, nor consider the genuine Meaning of it, as it stands connected, nor speak to the several Branches of it pertinently, nor urge all upon his Hearers with suitable Motives and Arguments; yet, if he follows a confused and rambling Method of his own, and wraps up Things in the Clouds; if he should use hard Phrases and metaphysical Distinctions, which he does not perhaps well understand himself; or low and flat Similies, or use a Jingle of high sounding Words, without a distinct Order; or if he should wave Method

rhod altogether, and tell his Hearers, that he'll only propose a Case, answer a Question, solve a Point, and speak a Word or two; this would be commended as admirable Acuteness of Mind. And the more abstruse and dark the Preacher is, the more does he pass for a Man of Learning. Now, would it not raise a *Groan*, to see Confusion preferred to Order, and Darkness to Light?

But now, *lastly*, The Pretence some People make Use of, for leaving one and going to another, is a Cause of *Groaning*; and that is, That they are not *edified*. And it must certainly be owned the Ground of their Proceeding would be very just, had they a right Notion affix'd to the Word *edified*: For by this cannot be meant, that 'tis impossible for them to understand the great Matters of Religion, or to see themselves, their Saviour and their Duty, in a clearer Light than formerly; or that they could not, by the Means they had, conceive a greater Aversion to Sin, and a more steady Liking to Holiness. Many Men, who are despised and contemned, might be instrumental, by the Grace of GOD, in producing those happy Effects, were not the Minds of Hearers prepossessed by Prejudice, and carried away with sinful Passion and Resentment. The Want of Edification with some, is the Want of something which might tickle itching Ears, gratify a corrupt Taste, and please a vicious Appetite. But sure, with as much Reason might a Man complain, that he is not fed, because he gets substantial Food, proper to nourish and build him up, and is not indulged with Juleps and Diet-Drinks, which are only fit for those whose Taste is already out of Order. And is not this a just Cause of *Groaning*? Such and the like are the Occasions of *Groaning* among the People.

But

But I notice, 2^{dly}. That there are likewise Occasions for this among the Pastors. And these are either in their Pulpit-Appearances, in their Judicative Capacities, or in their Underhand-Dealings.

(1.) In their Pulpit-Appearances. Now, tho' some of those Things I mentioned under the former Head, might justly come under this Class, yet I shall only notice, that the Text they chuse, these Things they insist most upon, and the Stress they lay upon them, are Causes of *Groaning*.

1st. I say, The Texts they chuse are a Cause of *Groaning*. Not that I imagine, that any Text of Scripture, in itself considered, can occasion this; but only, when such a Choice discovers Want of Judgment, a roving Imagination, and a wild fanciful Head, such as, when a Person raises a Doctrine from, and builds a large Discourse upon a Text, which it will by no Means bear as it stands connected, and then begins to prove his Doctrine, and enlarge upon it; this is to make the Text a meer Sign, or an ill chosen Frontispiece to the Discourse. It would be much better to chuse no Text at all, than thus to pervert it. I heard of one who once made a large Discourse on 1 Kings vi. 36. *In the fourth Year was the Foundation of the Lord's House laid, in the Month Zif*. And from this he shewed, that Christ was the Foundation of all to his People; that all the Vessels of the Sanctuary referred to him; and that all the Keys were hanged on his Belt. I heard of another, who, in order to shew that the Lord will destroy vain Thoughts, vain Notions, vain Practices, &c. till he came to seven, chose this for his Text, *The Lord will destroy the seven Nations of Canaan before you*. Now, when a Man has thus
teaz'd

teaz'd and tortur'd his Text, and shaped it to his own Fancy, if it could speak, it might say with Mr. *Erskine*, in his Riddles,

*What once I was, I am no more,
Yet still the same I was before.*

But, 2dly. The Matter which some Men insist most upon, is a *just Cause of Groaning*. If a Man should constantly declaim upon the Righteousness of our Saviour, Faith in him, and the Promises, and never shew what Returns of Gratitude and Thankfulness Men are bound to give to their heavenly Father and blessed Redeemer, by endeavouring to walk even as he also walked, and labouring after an Imitation of him in his blessed and holy Example, this would be very far wrong, on the one Hand. And if any one should make Morality the constant Subject of his Discourse, and declaim meerly, like a *Socrates* or a *Plato*, pressing the social Duties upon his Hearers, only from natural Arguments and Motives, and never make Use of the more forcible ones of the Gospel, nor lead Men to Christ the Foundation of all, and the Head of saving Influences; such an one would be as far wrong, on the other Hand. But if a Man, neglecting both the one and the other of these, should spend most of his Time in Matters of doubtful Disputation, and boldly assert these Things to be certain and undoubted Truths, of which good and great Men have very much doubted, and which Men perhaps as good and great as themselves have flatly denied; this would make one groan at the Self-Conceit, Pride and Confidence of such Men; and much more hateful must their Practice be, when they make their Audience Judges of these Things
about

about, which they have been put to a Stand themselves, when prest with Arguments on the other Side. They invert the Apostle's Practice; for they feed their People with strong Meat, and not with Milk, when they are not able to bear it. But perhaps they think the People will say to them, Am not I your Ass, on which you have ridden these many Years?

3dly. The Stress some Men lay on these Things is Matter of *Groaning*. How common is it for some Men to entertain their Audience with these Things which are Matter of Fire and Flame, which exasperate and inflame their Spirits, instead of these which should elevate the Minds of Men, sweeten their Tempers, and refine and better their Lives and Conversations. And yet this has been the Entertainment of great Audiences, upon the most solemn Occasions. And for these they will contend as warmly and bitterly as for the most momentuous Articles of our Faith. As if Christianity had appeared in the World, not to bring Peace among Men, but a Sword, in the literal Sense. And as if it were a Mark of Christ's Disciples, not to love, but to bite and devour one another.

Hinc ille lacryma !

Now, if most People's Minds should be entirely turned away from a Gospel Temper, by such Means, may not this occasion a *Groan*?

2dly. I said, Ministers gave Occasion of *Groaning* in their Judicative Capacities. In this Capacity four Things are Matter of *Groaning*, Cowardice, Dishonesty, Partiality and Cruelty.

1st. Cowardice. By this I mean Want of Courage to act according to the naked Sentiments of their Minds.

Minds. A great many are under the Management of this poor spirited and dastardly Master: For how frequently may we see some, who, when they have been brought down by Dint of Argument, without being able to reply, stand like a Sign-Post; or, if they have offered at speaking, have they not weagled hither and thither like a shot Crow, without hitting at any certain Thing: And yet have we not seen the same Men vote for the Thing they could not maintain. What was the Ground of this Management? Thus they reasoned with themselves, 'Yea, vote for an ungrateful Truth; stand up for a Thing so unpopular; run against the Stream; and put my Head in a Flame; and be pointed out by some Folk in all their Discourses; and be out of the good Graces of many who look'd upon me as a right Man. Nay, nay, that will not make my Pot play, nor increase my Grace-Marks; and therefore, let him chuse lean Truth who pleases, I'm for fat Falshood.' But they never mind, that quick-sighted People see them playing keek bo, and nive, nive, nick nack: But perhaps they think they can say, as in the Riddles,

*My Head is lost, and yet is win;
I'm fatherless, yet want not Kin.*

2dly. Dishonesty and Affectation. By this they point one Way and steer another. They deal much in *Crambe*. They seem fond of stroaking the Head of a Cause, when they despise it in Heart. They are sure to express themselves in general Terms, which cannot easily be taken Hold of. Such as, in the Election of Ministers, they'll boldly advance, that Christ has left a Right in his Legacy, to the People to elect their own Ministers; but they do not

not tell what they mean by the People, whether they mean, all the Hearers in a Congregation, the Heads of Families, or the Communicants only. This they industriously wave, that they may curry Favour with all. And should they fix on any one of these, as pointed out by the Legacy, they know it would be attended with insuperable Difficulties. The Dishonesty of others appears, in their endeavouring to amuse both Sides, and in giving seeming Hopes and Promises to both; and when they have thus dextrously played their Game with both Hands, they are apt to say, with the celebrated Author I have cited once and again,

*I am here, and yet I am elsewhere,
And yet I'm neither here nor there.*

3dly. Partiality is another Cause of *groaning*; and perhaps neither Side can be exempted from this Fault. The Crow imagines her own Bird whitest; and both Parties are apt to look upon those who favour their distinguishing Sentiments as the most worthy of Encouragement; and won't stand much to strain a Point of Justice, and by overstretching the Matter, even contrary to their avowed Principles, serve the Interest of their Man, when his Turn comes in their Cast. Now, when Men of sacred Characters are guilty of such bare-fac'd Partiality, what a Blemish does it throw upon their Profession? Their Conduct, in this Case, verifies the common Maxim, *Shew me the Man, and I'll shew you the Law*. They who applaud the Christian People's Consent in some Cases, in others will despise it, as the Consent of *Christian Rascals*; and, in other Cases, they who are keen to have Settlements go on according to a Majority of legal Votes, can break through

these, if they suspect the Candidate of *Marrow*, tho' they are not sure on't. Now, does not such Management as this expose these who should be Men of Candour, Uprightness and Integrity, as the most designing, artful and partial Men in the World? Hence, says Mr. *Erskine*,

*I break my Bonds at every Shock,
And yet the Bargain can't be broke.*

But, 4thly. Cruelty in Judicatories is a Cause of *groaning*. It has been objected in many Cases, that Ecclesiastical Courts are more severe and cruel than any other. I shall only give one Instance of their Cruelty, and that is, that these Courts are turned so barbarous, as to embrue their Hands in the Blood of their own Offspring. They had a hopeful Boy, whom they called *Thirty Two*, he had not lived long to play many Pranks, and yet he was accused, as a very mischievous, ill natur'd Smakie, upon which our *Assembly* strangled him with their own Hands; because the Bairns of the Family could get no Peace for him. The Ground of the Quarrel was, because they were the Mother of the Boy themselves; for they once adopted a Boy called *Ninety*, with whom they lived peaceably and quietly a long Time, tho' he was as like *Thirty Two*, as one Egg is like another. But well might *Thirty Two* say,

*My Kindred are not of one Mind,
I cruel Parents have and kind.*

But now I noticed, 5thly. That the Pastors give Occasion to *groaning* in their private and under-hand Dealings. I believe the thinking Part of our Countrymen

trymen are not Strangers to their indirect and secret Management, and that they endeavour to carry their Point by a great many hidden and unseen Springs ; much like the Mole, who works powerfully under Ground, when she cannot stand the open Light. Her low Eyes are too weak to endure such a bright and dazzling Light as that of the Sun. So many, who dare not do Things openly, compass their Business, by Ways and Means, privately and in Corners. Not that I'm against a Minister's giving a fair and just Character of a Person recommended to a Parish, if he deserves it ; or his doing all he can to promote his Interest, if he is a Person of Merit. The Fault here is, their raising a Hue and Cry, either themselves, or by their Emisseries, against others equally well accomplished and every Way as deserving as the Man they are for, if not more so, so as to tear their Character, and ruin their Reputation to the utmost of their Power. And this may be done without a direct Accusation of the Persons they are against. It may be done in dumb Language ; for if their Advice and Opinion is sought about them, they'll shrug up their Shoulders, lift up their Hands, or turn up their Eye, and claw their Heads, as if something had bit them ; and, with a Wave of their Hand, tell they have nothing to say, but they have heard Stories of him. Thus the Clergy give the heavy Stroke, in buoying up the People, and then they raise the loud Cry. And at Bottom all this is done from a secret Fear, lest such Persons should out-shine them, have a greater Esteem, and be more valued, by thinking Persons, than they are themselves. But sure a good Man should be very well pleased to see others excel in every bright and shining Ornament, and to see them capable, by the Grace of GOD, to promote

mote his Glory, and the Good of Souls, tho' they themselves should decrease. Their private Management is likewise very odd, in Case of their own Transportation. Instances can be given of their assuring their People, privately, of their Resolution to live and die with them; and of their contradicting this when the Case came to a Decision. I heard of one, who had given Assurances of this Kind to his People, and when the Day came that the Presbytery were to determine the Case, having asked his Opinion, he told them, he had been fully resolved to stay with his People till last Night, when, praying for Direction, a Beam of Light darted in upon his Soul, with the Vision of the Man of Macedonia, saying, *Come over and help us.* But an honest Man said, That if the Man of Macedonia, had called him over to a Parish with 500 Merks, the Light had not been so strong; since 70 Guineas shine brighter than the Half of them; and the Light being less, he would not so soon have obeyed the Call. The private Assurances Ministers some Times give, contradict their publick Management, which was very notorious in the Case of a Highland Gentleman, who had an Affair before the Presbytery, and had got a Promise from every particular Member, privately, to favour his Side; but when it came to a Decision, he was called in, and told that the Affair was determined by the Presbytery against him; upon which, he twitted them severely thus, *Fat a Man is that ye call the Presbytery? I kenna sa's that ye ca' the Presbytery; for, I am sure, I see na a Mess. John, nor a Mess. David here, but I had his Promise. If I had ken't fat a Man be is ye ca' the Presbytery, I would ha' spoke to him too.* So much for the Causes of groaning. I come now, 3dly. To offer some Thoughts to prevent

vent the like melancholy Temper for the Time to come, and these I must offer, *First*, To the People. *2dly*. To the *Pastors*.

I. To the People, who I hope will take what I say in good Part, since I only aim at their Good and Advantage.

First, Then, I sincerely wish they would endeavour to attain and fix in their Minds clear and distinct Notions of the common Principles of Religion, such as may truly affect their Hearts, and better their Lives; and if ever they expect to attain this, so as to reap a lasting Benefit and Advantage, they must learn to read their Bibles with Distinctness, sober Thought and Attention, and wait humbly for that Assistance from above, which alone can make them understand what they read. And, for their Help in this Matter, they should peruse such Books as are of approved Plainness, Soundness and Piety; such as the *Confession of Faith*, the *Westminster Catechism*, shorter and larger, *Guthrie's Trial*, and many others well worth the reading. And for a Person to pretend to judge, in knotty and subtil Controversies, when he has a scanty Knowledge of Things which should be first known, looks as absurd, as if one should pretend to judge in the highest Parts of the most difficult Science, when he knows not the first Principles of it.

2dly. I would have them endeavour to practise, honestly and sincerely, what they know clearly and certainly; such as, those Duties they owe to God, themselves and their Fellow-Creatures, and this from a Principle of Faith, and Dependence on their Saviour. For if they know these Things, they are only happy when they do them. In vain would a Man pretend to know God, when he neither loves

loves nor worships him; or his Saviour, when he neither believes in him, nor depends upon him. And in vain does a Man pretend to know and love the bright and shining Duties of Christianity, when he despises and contradicts them in the whole Course of his Life. As well might a Man pretend to a Skill to steer a Ship to any Port of Christendom, and yet err and bungle in every Experiment he makes.

3dly. I could heartily wish, that People would beware of Pride, Self-conceit, and a vain Opinion of themselves; and labour more to have a humble Temper of Mind, Modesty and Discretion. These are of great Price, and very apt to gain upon Men, when Pride, Conceit and Haughtiness, expose any one to Ridicule and Contempt. It would be very grating and uneasy to a Father, or Mother, to hear a Child of their own, who had no Experience of Affairs, widely censure their Management, and treat their Conduct with the greatest Disrespect and Contempt, nay, with very disagreeable and wounding Language. Every one will see, at first Sight, how far such a Child is in the Wrong, and what he deserves.

4thly. I would have the People beware of an implicate Faith; I mean, I would not have them believe Things upon Trust, or receive them as certain and undoubted Truths, because they are entertained by this or the other Man, in whose Favour they are prejudged. We must call no Man, *Father*, upon Earth, in this Sense, and you know all Protestants condemn those of the Popish Persuasion for this Kind of Faith; and yet I am afraid too much of it prevails among us. For is it not very common for many to swallow down, very glibly, every Thing that some Men say, if it should be never so absurd

absurd or weakly supported. And this they believe only on the Speaker's Authority. On the other Hand, they'll scarce vouchsafe a Hearing to what is said by another of whom they have received a bad Impression, tho' what he says should be supported with never so much Strength of Reason and Argument. This is implicate Faith with a Witness, and believing Things to be true, meerly because we wish them to be so; and if they are mistaken, are not they blindly and fatally misled?

5thly. I would have People aware of wandering and dividing, and of saying, upon frivolous Pretences, I am of *Paul*, and I of *Apollos*. The politick Maxim experienced Enemies go upon, is, *Divide, and then command*. Never can we play a better Game for our Enemies, than to divide and split among ourselves. And never was any Church or Constitution brought to Ruin, but by some among themselves, who, either from a weak or wicked Design, have given the most deadly Blow. A Stroke design'd against a Man from without, may be parry'd off; but an Impostume in the Head, is sure to strike him dead. Sure, then, People should be wise, and not do that foolishly with their own Hands, which their very worst Enemies would heartily have them to do.

6thly. I would have People to beware of *Stiffness*, *Obstinacy*, and the Spirit of *Opposition*. Does it not betray great Weakness, and a great Degree of Folly, to stand up keenly and warmly against an unexceptionable and well accomplished Man, meerly because he happens to be the Choice of some one or more of a superior Rank. This is a Sign of a very perverse and humorsom Temper, not to be for a Man whom they would otherwise think well of, did not a Gentleman esteem him as well as they.

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Equally as well might a Man refuse to be cured by a skilful Physician, because he is employed by Persons in a Station of Life above them.

7thly. I would have People betake themselves to God by Prayer, when Controversies are on Foot, which are a little above their Reach, and which require more Learning than they are Masters of to judge in the Case. They may indeed modestly consult their Guides, and propose their Difficulties discreetly, that they may come to some Understanding of the Affair. But where the learnedest differ, they should not assume an Air of Authority, but appear modest in their Behaviour; and, in private, pray to God to establish the Peace of *Zion*, and in his good Time to bring Light out of Darkness. So much for the People.

I come now to offer some Thoughts to the *Pastors*.

First, I would have them endeavour to store their Minds, with a great deal of substantial and useful Knowledge, and labour to excel in these Things which properly belong to their Character. Their Reach, in Matters within the Compass of their Calling, ought certainly to go beyond that of their Audience. It becomes them to have clear Notices, and distinct Apprehensions of the best and most useful Things; and they should shew themselves Workmen that need not be ashamed; when their Heads are stored, and their Hearts sensibly affected with the great and important Matters of Christianity, which tend to make themselves and their Hearers wiser and better. It is surely a sorry Commendation, to have it said, That they are good at every Thing but their own Profession. Therefore they should exert themselves to the utmost to excel in this, that they may not fall under the Contempt
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and Ridicule of their Hearers. For why, 'tis an exceeding mortifying Sight to see a Man teaching others, who is extreamly Hide-bound and constipate himself; who mistakes his Text, and wanders from his Subject, as far as from *Dan* to *Beer-sheba*; or say such weak and ridiculous Things as exposes the sacred Character, and brings the Station he is in under Contempt. Sure, then, they should endeavour to be like Scribes fitted for the Kingdom of Heaven, able to bring out of their Treasures Things new and old, to the Glory of God, and the Good of Men.

2dly. I would have them to make the main Drift of their Discourses tend to give Men a right Sense of God, and his Perfections upon their Minds, to bring them to a firm and steady Persuasion of Christianity, upon just and solid Grounds, and consequently to endeavour to bring them to a sincere Desire of entertaining their Saviour as their Refuge and only Hope; to bring them to a sincere Repentance for the Corruptions of their Natures, and the many Miscarriages of their Lives; to excite them to every good Word and Work, which may adorn their holy Profession, such as Humility, Patience, Meekness, Temperance, brotherly Kindness and Charity. These Things may have a low Sound in some Men's Ears, but sure the Gospel makes them of great Weight, and of a mighty Signification; and will any Man dare to account these Things small, which their Saviour and his Apostles counted great?

3dly. I would have them resolve with themselves to say nothing in publick, but what they approve in their own Minds, upon good Grounds, in private. For how can a Man be answerable to God, or himself, in demanding a Belief of Things from his Hearers, when he doubts of them very much

in his own Mind? For Example, if a Minister should persuade his People, that Christ, in his Legacy, has left the People a Right to vote for their own Ministers, when he cannot point out any one Text to favour and support such a Sentiment; or, if he should take a Cause to be just and true upon Trust, when it is really bad, and then should exhort his People to Fasting and Prayer for its Success, or to Thanksgiving if it hath taken Place; or, if any one should charge the Bulk of his Brethren, as guilty of Errors and Defections, and insolently call those Intruders, who have had as good a Call as themselves, nay, perhaps much better than those they approve of, must not this look ridiculously insolent and foolish to every Man who thinks soberly? Can there be a more odious Thing, than to see a bold Reproacher, build his own Reputation upon the Infamy and Ruin of every one else?

4thly. I would have them to be of a peaceable Spirit, in Imitation of the great Founder of our Faith, whom they ought to resemble. Much unlike this Temper are those Men, who, like the *Salamander*, love to live always in the Fire, and are never pleased, unless every Thing be shaped according to their own Fancy; nor ever contented, unless every one bow the Knee to them, and the beloved, but fulsom, Brats of their own Brain; nay, are so stiff and obstinate, that they won't join with the rest of their Brethren better than themselves, unless they get them rebuked at the Bar, because they did Things according to the genuine Dictates of their own Minds, and the established Laws of the Society, and not according to their Freak and Humour. This is like the mad Fit of a Boy, who resolves to make away himself, because he can't have a Rattle when he should mind his Book.

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5thly. I would have them of a forbearing Spirit; that is, I would not have them load the Names and Characters of those who differ from them in some particular Things, and cry out against them as the worst of Men; as Men who dare not stand the Touch-Stone, and are not acquainted with the *Mason-Word*, when perhaps their Principles are sounder, and much more agreeable to the Practice of the Church, in her best Periods, than their own. Little do such Men think what a mean Opinion every judicious Man has of such *Billingsgate*, unmannerly and unmerciful Treatment of good Men from the Chair of Verity, when 'tis made a publick Stage for Calumny, Satyr and Reproach: And if what they say were never so true, little do they remember, that 'tis reasonable to think, that twenty Errors of the Understanding, when in some Measure invincible, will meet with an easier Pardon, from a merciful GOD, than one notorious Error of the Conversation, against our Light. And yet how easily do we find many pass the last, when they are implacable against the first.

6thly. I would have Pastors to be firm, steady and constant in maintaining the plain and avowed Principles of our Church, and endeavour to get above a mean and a dastardly Spirit, which hinders them to speak as they think, and makes them sneakingly close their Mouth upon the Truth, as soon as it endeavours to get out; and all this, lest they should lose their Popularity, and ride with a thin Backing in all their publick Appearances. They imagine, that if they should let the Mare's Halter slip out of their Hand, that she'll turn so skittish, as that they shall never be able to mount her again. But they don't remember, that the Mare thinks, *Time about*
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is fair Play; and that, as they have ridden her many a Day, so she expects to ride them in her Turn.

7thly. When they come to establish any new Law, for the Good of Society, I would have them divest themselves of Passion, Prejudice, a View to private Interest, or a Regard to the unreasonable Clamours of thoughtless Persons. I would have them lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and resolve, that as they must be answerable to a Witness within their own Breast, and to One who is infinitely greater than their own Hearts, so they would listen, with calm and unprejudiced Attention, to what may be said for or against the Thing they have in View; and that they will not be for the establishing of any Act or Rule, but what they are convinced, in their own Minds, is reasonable, just and good; and that they will be so far from crying, *a Vote, a Vote, Moderator*, when they find Arguments too stiff and hard for them, that they had rather quit their Reputation among those who don't go deep into Matters, but look superficially at them, than be for the enacting of any Thing which contradicts their own good Sense and Reason.

These are the Thoughts I had to offer; and could Men be prevailed upon to comply with them, they might possibly be a happy Means to make an agreeable Alteration in the Face of Affairs; and at last, by the Grace of GOD, restore Peace and Harmony to our distracted and divided Church.

— *Si quid novisti rectius istis
Candidus imperti, si non his utere mecum.*

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